Romanization System for Japanese Kana

Modified Hepburn System
BGN/PCGN 1976 Agreement

The modified Hepburn system for the normalization of Japanese has been in use by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names and the U.K. Permanent Committee on Geographical Names since the 1930's and has been used extensively in the romanization of Japanese geographic names. The system is well adapted to the general needs of speakers of English and is the most widely used system for romanization of Japanese.

The Japanese language is written in two forms: in *kanji*, which are Sino-Japanese characters, and in *kana*, which are syllabic symbols. There are two styles of *kana*, namely *katakana*, the squared form, and *hiragana*, the cursive form. *Katakana* symbols were originally derived from parts of *kanji* characters and today are used primarily for the phonetic transcription of foreign words and as the equivalent of italics. *Hiragana* symbols, on the other hand, were originally created by simplifying the strokes of whole *kanji* characters and are used to represent grammatical particles and suffixes. Running text is usually written in *kanji* with *kana* interspersed. Geographic names, personal names, and words written in isolation are usually written in *kanji* with or without the addition of small-script *kana* equivalents, which, when used for that purpose, are referred to as *furigana*.

Many alternate *kana* forms were abolished in a post -World War II language reform. If reference to these forms is required, the traditional Hepburn system for Japanese should be consulted.[1]

Kanji may be romanized with the aid of Japanese-English dictionaries that utilize the modified Hepburn system.[2] A familiarity with the grammatical structure of the Japanese language, as well as with the Japanese writing system, is essential for the correct romanization of *kanji*.

In *Romanji*, in modern Japan, long vowels are also frequently shown as doubled, rather than with a macron.

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[1] *The system was first presented in* <u>A Japanese and English Dictionary: with an English and Japanese Index.</u>
  J.C. Hepburn, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1867
[2] <u>*e.g. Beginners' Dictionary of Chinese and Japanese Characters,*</u> *compiled by Arthur Rose-Innes and published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1944*

Basic Forms
[hiragana | katakana | romaji]

Vowels	K	S	T	N	H	M	Glides	R	W	-n
A: あ|ア|a	か|カ|ka	さ|サ|sa	た|タ|ta	な|ナ|na	は|ハ|ha (wa)(1)	ま|マ|ma	や|ヤ|ya	ら|ラ|ra	わ|ワ|wa	ん|ン|n(3)
I: い|イ|i	き|キ|ki	し|シ|shi	ち|チ|chi	に|ニ|ni	ひ|ヒ|hi	み|ミ|mi		り|リ|ri		
U: う|ウ|u	く|ク|ku	す|ス|su	つ|ツ|tsu(4)	ぬ|ヌ|nu	ふ|フ|fu	む|ム|mu	ゆ|ユ|yu	る|ル|ru		
E: え|エ|e	け|ケ|ke (ga)(2)	せ|セ|se	て|テ|te	ね|ネ|ne	へ|ヘ|he (e)(1)	め|メ|me		れ|レ|re		
O: お|オ|o	こ|コ|ko	そ|ソ|so	と|ト|to	の|ノ|no	ほ|ホ|ho	も|モ|mo	よ|ヨ|yo	ろ|ロ|ro	を|ヲ|wo	
A:	が|ガ|ga	ざ|ザ|za	だ|ダ|da		ば|バ|ba					
I:	ぎ|ギ|gi	じ|ジ|ji	ぢ|ヂ|ji		び|ビ|bi					
U:	ぐ|グ|gu	ず|ズ|zu	づ|ヅ|zu		ぶ|ブ|bu		ゔ|ヴ|v(5)			
E:	げ|ゲ|ge	ぜ|ゼ|ze	で|デ|de		べ|ベ|be					
O:	ご|ゴ|go	ぞ|ゾ|zo	ど|ド|do		ぼ|ボ|bo					
A:					ぱ|パ|pa					
I:					ぴ|ピ|pi					
U:					ぷ|プ|pu					
E:					ぺ|ペ|pe					
O:					ぽ|ポ|po					

Combined Forms
[hiragana | katakana | romaji]

Vowels	K	S	T	N	H	M	Glides	R	W	-n
A:	きゃ|キャ|kya	しゃ|シャ|sha	ちゃ|チャ|cha	にゃ|ニャ|nya	ひゃ|ヒャ|hya	みゃ|ミャ|mya		りゃ|リャ|rya		
U:	きゅ|キュ|kyu	しゅ|シュ|shu	ちゅ|チュ|chu	にゅ|ニュ|nyu	ひゅ|ヒュ|hyu	みゅ|ミュ|myu		りゅ|リュ|ryu		
Ū:	きゅう|キュウ|kyū	しゅう|シュウ|shū	ちゅう|チュウ|chū	にゅう|ニュウ|nyū	ひゅう|ヒュウ|hyū	みゅう|ミュウ|myū		りゅう|リュウ|ryū		
O:	きょ|キョ|kyo	しょ|ショ|sho	ちょ|チョ|cho	にょ|ニョ|nyo	ひょ|ヒョ|hyo	みょ|ミョ|myo		りょ|リョ|ryo		
Ō:	きょう|キョウ|kyō	しょう|ショウ|shō	ちょう|チョウ|chō	にょう|ニョウ|nyō	ひょう|ヒョウ|hyō	みょう|ミョウ|myō	よう|ヨウ|yō	りょう|リョウ|ryō		
A:	ぎゃ|ギャ|gya	じゃ|ジャ|ja			びゃ|ビャ|bya					
U:	ぎゅ|ギュ|gyu	じゅ|ジュ|ju			びゅ|ビュ|byu					
E:	ぎゅう|ギュウ|gyū	じゅう|ジュウ|jū			びゅう|ビュウ|byū					
O:	ぎょ|ギョ|gyo	じょ|ジョ|jo			びょ|ビョ|byo					
A:	ぎょう|ギョウ|gyō	じょう|ジョウ|jō			びょう|ビョウ|byō					
I:	こう|コウ|kō	そう|ソウ|sō	とう|トウ|tō	のう|ノウ|nō	ぼう|ボウ|bō	もう|モウ|mō		ろう|ロウ|rō		
U:	ごう|ゴウ|gō	ぞう|ゾウ|zō	どう|ドウ|dō		ぴゃ|ピャ|pya					
E:					ぴゅ|ピュ|pyu					
O:					ぴゅう|ピュウ|pyū					
A:					ぴょ|ピョ|pyo					
I:					ぴょう|ピョウ|pyō					
U:					ぽう|ポウ|pō					

- Lengthens preceding vowel in katakana

1) (wa) and (e) are used when (ha) and (he) are used as grammatical particles.
2) The symbol looking much like katakana (ke) becomes (ga) when placed between two kanji characters in place names (Seki ga Hara).
3) n' is used before y-glide or a vowel letter.
4) A small-script tsu form is inserted kana symbols to indicate a double consonant and is romanized as k before k; as before s or sh; as t before t, ts, or ch; and as p before p.
5) This katakana symbol is used only in the transcription of foreign words.